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Executive Summary

How Far Can the Healthy Kids Program Go in Closing Coverage Gaps for Children in Los Angeles County?

A Baseline Analysis With the 2002/2003
Los Angeles County Health Survey

Prepared for:



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One in every ten children in Los Angeles County lacked health insurance coverage in 2002/2003. This brief uses Los Angeles County Health Survey data to assess how these children could be reached. Findings suggest that the Healthy Kids program and L.A.'s Children's Health Initiative have the potential to substantially reduce uninsurance rates for L.A.'s children without eroding private coverage. A renewed push to enroll more children in public health programs could also reduce the uninsurance rate variations — especially with respect to citizenship status.

Results

Variations in Uninsured Rates

- **Citizenship status.** Fully Forty-two percent of the non-citizen children were uninsured compared to 7.3 percent of citizen children. Children whose parents were interviewed in a language other than English and those whose parents were born outside of the United States or were not citizens were uninsured at higher rates than other children.
- **Children's age.** Uninsured rates for children age 5 or younger were about half the size of the rates found among school-age children.
- **Income.** The uninsured rate among children living below the federal poverty level was 16.3 percent compared to 1.3 percent for children with family incomes above three times the poverty line.
- **Parent's Mental Health.** Children living with parents who reported feeling depressed were more likely to be uninsured than other children.

- **Children's Health Status.** Nearly 7 percent of children in excellent health lacked insurance while 16 percent of those in fair or poor health had no coverage.
- **Location.** Children in the Metro and South Service Planning Areas (SPAs) appear to have the highest uninsured rates within L.A. County while children in the West SPA have the lowest rates, likely due to socio-economic factors.

Healthy Kids' Potential Reach

- Fully 93 percent of uninsured non-citizen children could have qualified for Medi-Cal or Healthy Families based on low-income. Undocumented children denied coverage before would now qualify for the Healthy Kids program, particularly those ages 5 or younger.
- About 83 percent of uninsured citizen children could have qualified for Medi-Cal or Healthy Families based on low-income. Those at slightly higher incomes can now qualify for Healthy Kids.



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Reasons Uninsured Children Ages 0-17 Are Not Enrolled in Public Programs in L.A. County, 2002/2003

	Share of Uninsured Children	Share of Uninsured Citizen Children [^]	Share of Uninsured Non-citizen Children
Currently Uninsured: Have Tried Applying			
Yes	41.9%	44.0%	38.3%
No	57.4%	55.2%	61.1%
Don't Know	0.7%	0.8%	0.6%
Sample Size	566	381	183
<u>AMONG THOSE WHO TRIED APPLYING, REASONS CHILD NOT ENROLLED</u>			
Forms too Complicated			
Yes	30.7%	30.1%	32.1%
No	61.0%	64.6%	53.1%
Don't Know	8.3%	5.3%	14.8%
Was Told Child Not Eligible			
Yes	50.1%	44.2%	63.2% ^{**}
No	43.8%	49.5%	31.2%
Don't Know	6.1%	6.3%	5.6%
Language Barriers¹			
Yes	51.7%	53.0%	50.0%
No	45.0%	44.3%	45.9%
Don't Know	3.3%	2.7%	4.1%
Able to Complete the Application			
Yes	63.8%	68.4%	53.6% [*]
No	34.1%	29.2%	45.1%
Don't Know	2.1%	2.5%	1.3%
<u>AMONG THOSE WHO DID NOT TRY APPLYING, REASONS DID NOT APPLY</u>			
Child in Good Health and Didn't Need Insurance			
Yes	42.8%	42.1%	44.9%
No	53.7%	54.4%	51.6%
Don't Know	3.5%	3.5%	3.6%

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Thought Medi-Cal or Healthy Families was Not a Good Program			
Yes	19.8%	18.7%	22.0%
No	70.6%	71.3%	69.8%
Don't Know	9.7%	10.0%	8.3%
Afraid Immigration Status Might be Affected			
Yes	26.0%	14.3%	46.9% ^{**}
No	71.2%	85.5%	46.8%
Don't Know	2.8%	0.2%	6.4%
Didn't Know Where to Go or Apply			
Yes	49.5%	42.3%	61.1%
No	49.1%	55.4%	38.9%
Don't Know	1.5%	2.3%	---
Didn't Think They'd be Treated Fairly at Medi-Cal/HF Office			
Yes	25.9%	23.9%	28.9% ^{**}
No	66.0%	68.0%	62.6%
Don't Know	8.1%	8.1%	8.4%
Could Afford to Pay Health Care as Needed			
Yes	35.5%	36.8%	32.9%
No	59.4%	59.1%	60.0%
Don't Know	5.2%	4.1%	7.1%
Didn't Think Child Was Eligible			
Yes	40.1%	35.2%	49.3% [*]
No	50.9%	54.8%	44.3%
Don't Know	9.0%	10.0%	6.4%
Didn't Apply because Other Children in Family Weren't Eligible			
Yes	24.5%	20.1%	32.7% [*]
No	66.0%	71.2%	56.3%
Don't Know	9.5%	8.8%	11.0%



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Source: Urban Institute calculations of the 2002/2003 Los Angeles County Health Survey.

Notes: Public Health Insurance: Medi-Cal for adults, Medi-Cal and Healthy Families for children.

¹ Only respondents who were interviewed in a non-English language received this question.

[^] Tests of significance performed on respondents who answered “yes” to the question, by citizenship status with “Citizen Children” as the reference category.

* $p < .05$; ** $p \leq .01$



To view the entire report visit www.calendow.org.



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